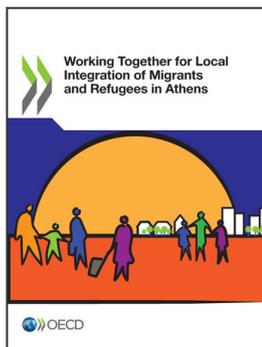


Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to present the structure and accessibility of existing services, initiatives and projects with regards to migrant integration in the Municipality of Athens. The case study highlights the different levels of government across which integration matters are dealt with and the room for manoeuvre that the municipality has to navigate these issues, in dialogue with local stakeholders (citizens, NGOs, migrant organisations, private sector, unions, etc.). It also identifies existing future difficulties and challenges and assesses possible solutions to those problems, along with highlighting best practices that could possibly be replicated elsewhere. Greece has recently been the theatre of an unprecedented refugee flow (as far as the country's experience is concerned). When examining the Municipality of Athens it is important to take into account contextual factors that constitute the framework within which policies have been developed (or not) and within which proposed policies originating in the European/international experience could be implemented (or not). In the Greek case, four key elements are to be kept in mind: the limited past experience in dealing with migrant integration issues, the 2015-16 peak of refugee arrivals, the economic and social crisis and the centralised nature of the Greek public governance. The convergence of these factors contributed to a context of multi-faceted crisis within which authorities – such as the Municipality of Athens – had to respond swiftly without necessarily having the institutional and/or financial background to do so. Nevertheless, the Municipality stepped in to deal with the recent inflows of refugees and asylum seekers and bolster vulnerable communities (long-standing migrants included).



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